

# Early Detection Saves Lives Coalition: Breast cancer bill moving through Legislature could save millions of lives

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[Wausau, Wis.] – WSAW-TV recently highlighted Senate Bill 121, a bipartisan bill aimed at increasing access to life-saving imaging for those with dense breast tissue and those at increased risk of breast cancer. According to the CDC, about 40% of women have dense breast tissue, making them 4-6 times more likely to get breast cancer and making cancer much more difficult to detect on standard mammograms.

The story ran just days before First Lady Jill Biden announced plans to visit Wisconsin to highlight the importance of early detection and improving access to cancer screenings. SB 121 has widespread support with over one-third of the Legislature co-sponsoring the bill and the backing of major health organizations.

An early cancer diagnosis not only increases survival rates but can also save patients money compared to a late-stage diagnosis. In other states where similar legislation has been passed, insurance costs were estimated to increase \$0.04-\$0.07 per member per month – just \$0.84 per year at most.

As Lindsey O'Connor, president of Wisconsin Breast Cancer Coalition said: "The cost of healthcare shouldn't prohibit someone from receiving lifesaving treatment in order to live a good quality of life."

As Dr. Biden visits Madison, the area legislators co-sponsoring SB 121 include: Sen. Dianne Hesselbein, Sen. Kelda Roys, Rep. Jimmy Anderson, Rep. Samba Baldeh, Rep. Mike Bare, Rep. Jenna Jacobson, Rep. Alex Joers, Rep. Melissa Ratcliff, and Rep.

Lisa Subeck.

Watch the video [here](#) or read the full story below:

[WSAW-TV](#)

Dominique O'Neill

August 25, 2023

Senate Bill 121 is circulating in the state Legislature and is gaining bipartisan support. Currently, there are more than 20 co-sponsors including representatives Scott Krug of Nekoosa and John Spiros of Marshfield.

If the bill is passed, it would eliminate the cost for women who need additional breast cancer screening. That's especially important since cancer is harder to detect in women who have dense breast tissue.

The National Breast Cancer Foundation says 1 in 8 women will develop breast cancer. According to the CDC, the standard mammogram can miss up to 40% of cancers in dense breasts.

"I have had a double mastectomy and lots of subsequent surgeries. I just been fighting this for the past 8 years," said Gail Zeamer of Neenah who is a breast cancer survivor.

She is an advocate for the bill. Over the period of one week in 2016, she went from being cleared to being diagnosed with Stage 3 cancer. At the time, she didn't have access to advanced breast cancer screenings.

"This is not an easy journey when you have a late diagnosis," said Zeamer.

"The cost of healthcare shouldn't prohibit someone from receiving lifesaving treatment in order to live a good quality of life," said Lindsey O'Connor who is president of the Wisconsin Breast Cancer Coalition.

Over 70% of breast cancers are found in dense breasts. She says the screening is better than relying on a self-exam and trying to cut costs. "In order to see potential tumors and other issues, the additional screenings like Ultrasounds and MRIs are beneficial," said O'Connor.

In other states with similar legislation, it costs less than a dollar per year to add the coverage.

“We have the technology to detect breast cancer early, and we have access to it now,” said Zeamer.

“It doesn’t matter which political affiliation you have or what race you are or what gender you are, everyone is impacted by Breast Cancer, and if there are ways we can pass legislation that will ensure people have the opportunity to receive treatment that they deserve I think it’s something we should do,” said O’Connor.

The Senate has already held a hearing. A hearing in the Assembly is expected to take place sometime this fall.